

Run Response Committee Team 1
November 16, 2004
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Attendance: Merry Wills, Melissa Beecher, Dennis Banks, Sheli Schindler, Lori Griggs, Joe Wright, Bob Willhelm, Sherrie Spilde, Cheri Miller, Kris Strand, Dwight Brown.

Discussion regarding youth on run that are not in the system

Merry explained that Kris with Cedars had been meeting with Sheli with the Assessment Center and they were working on a letter to parents that had a child on run for 2 weeks or more (not on probation or a state ward). The letter would offer services from the different agencies and be a cooperative effort between the Assessment Center and LPD.

Merry stated that the intent was to try to work with the families so that runaways would not end up in the system and Street Outreach could make contact and work with parents to prevent future runaway behaviors. Merry was concerned that two weeks was too long a time for this connection to be made. Merry stated that she thought that it would better if Cedars could reach out to the parents—not just send a letter or brochure that says that they can contact Cedars. The privacy issues of contacting the parents were discussed. This group may need to contact the CJIS committee to work through some of these details.

Discussion regarding youth that are on run but in the system such as state wards, youth on Probation, youth running from Freeway

Merry stated that the second part to this discussion is the chronic runaways, which are mainly kids in the HHS system. Sheli stated when a youth is a state ward and runs away they may go back to the group home they ran from depending on how long they were gone. If they don't go back to the group home they go to the Assessment Center.

Merry stated that what she sees in the shelters, are kids that keep running and then returning after they are done messing around. Merry asked if there is a way for Cedars to not have to report the youth with behavior patterns of leaving without permission and returning on their own. Sherrie stated that the youth has to be reported to the police as a runaway because HHS is required to know where the youth is at all times. Joe stated that the one time a youth wasn't reported it could be abduction so it must be reported.

Joe stated that there should be a place to put kids when they run. Dennis stated that currently a place like that does not exist.

A type of system with levels was suggested where after so many runs a youth is placed in staff secure as wake up call. It was agreed that options to place youth on run are very limited. Merry stated that the Family Violence Council has gotten a grant to look at youth that are runners and/or homeless. They will be looking at how our current system responds to runaway youth and in the process hope to identify gaps in services.

Sheli asked who could access foster care. Sherrie replied that the youth must be a state ward and only law enforcement could remove a child from the home.

Sheli commented that one gap may be to look at the many different options when law enforcement picks up a youth. Many times it depends on certain things such as when the youth is picked up. Most youth are picked up after hours and the Assessment Center has to suggest Freeway or contacting the HHS Hotline to see if the youth is a state ward to the officer. Often the officer cannot locate anyone that will accept the youth and the Assessment Center is where the youth is taken after the officer has exhausted all of the places where the youth is supposed to go.

Sherrie stated that HHS is contracting with Visinet to stay with the youth until a placement is located. Visinet will also transport the youth to the placement. Law enforcement was not aware of this service so they have not been using it. Sheli stated that law enforcement would love to have someone that could locate a placement for the youth but they are not able to use the Assessment Center for this service because they do not have the resources to do this. Melissa asked if Visinet could provide this service. Sheli stated they could but not for a youth that is unstable.

Merry stated that the issue is not only where the youth should go but also when the youth is placed how to deal with the behavior. Sheli stated that the Assessment Center is receiving about one call a night in which they are referring to Cedars. Merry stated that she has seen an increase in numbers of runaways recently. Merry added that they are working on addressing the issue of youth who are treated as runaway but instead are just leaving, goofing around and then coming back to shelter.

Melissa asked how many youth are called in on run and then come back later that day. Joe was going to look at getting that information to Melissa. Melissa asked if each time a youth goes on run if law enforcement had to come to the shelter and take a report even if it was the third time in a day that they have ran. Joe said yes. Melissa asked if fax or phone could handle this for the youth that Cedars has in its shelters. Merry stated that they had done this in the past.

Current Shelter Availability

Sherrie stated that HHS is looking at the number of shelters available each week and twice each month they have found that they have to take kids outside the community because shelters are full.

Joe also stated that youth from Omaha are increasingly running away from Lincoln shelters and they are spending a large amount of time dealing with them. Melissa asked how many youth are running away are from Omaha. Joe stated that they responded to 17 calls regarding one particular Omaha runaways from October 19-29, 2004.

It was agreed by all that this committee needs to look at the current system for runaways. Specifically, the types of youth on run, where the youth is at in the system, the number of

runs from different locations, and where the report was terminated such as from Freeway or other Cedars programs should be reviewed.

It was expressed that there was a need for a facility with a higher level of service than Freeway but less than staff secure to serve runaway youth. Sheli asked if there was a way for the Assessment Center to have access to information on who was a state ward without contacting HHS. It takes law enforcement at least a half hour to figure out what type of youth they are dealing with and if the Assessment Center had access they could do this for law enforcement. Sherrie said that they would have to call the 1-800 number. HHS has a dedicated staff person for the hotline and that person could add the preferred placement so the hotline person would always know where a youth should go.

Sherrie added that HHS had wanted to share an information system with law enforcement and had a grant that would fund the system but Chief Cassidy was concerned about confidentiality.

Committee Priorities

- Statistics on Runaways
Analyze the numbers of runaways by location (group home, shelter, home); type of youth and where they are at in the system (state ward, probation, not in system); and where the report is terminated (did the youth come back to the shelter or did police pick up the youth).
- Information Sharing
- Review Current System (addressing runaway youth and identify gaps)
- Availability of Placements for Runaways
- Collaboration with Family Crimes and SOS program
- Preventative Programs

Set next meeting date:

The next meeting will be on January 4, 2005 at 1:00 p.m. in the Human Services Conference Room 555 S. 9th St.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Beecher